

Building Safety Month Scholarship Essay

Dear all who work to protect and save our lives with building codes,

This is a thank you letter, for all your work and dedication to ensure the well-being of the society. Thank you for this job that requires much thought and intellect and creativity at times to figure out what the best possible solution is. It is a job that focuses on the safety of a collective and makes that the priority of the outcome. This is something that we, as a society, do not always acknowledge and appreciate to the extent that we should, and a job that works to keep others safe is no small job. Thank you to all the members of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association, and the Virginia Plumbing and Mechanical Inspectors Association for your job and for the lives that you have saved doing it so well.

I grew up attending a public school. What this means—when thinking about it in a new perspective—is that my parents were dropping me off at a place where I was to spend the entire day, and then they would expect me to be there still, safe and sound, at the end of the day when they came to pick me up. This may seem like a very obvious statement... of course my parents would expect me to still be there, safe and sound, why wouldn't I be? But that is my point! A parent can drop their child off in some building away from them and there is no worry that the structure of the building is unsafe, or that no one will know where to go in the case of an emergency. This is such a privilege! Thank you for this privilege! It is like blind trust that we have, or better yet that *we have been given the opportunity to have*, and that we take for granted most of the time.

At school, I have had to participate in many, many fire drills over the course of the years, along with tornado drills, bomb threat drills, invader drills, bus evacuation drills and some others. Through all of these I, as well as all my peers, have learned what the safest course of action is in the case of the different types of emergencies. I know I can always count on the exit signs that are in place to guide me in the direction I should be headed to safely exit. I know that there are fire alarms that can be pulled and there are always fire extinguishers around. The best part is that this learning is happening from a very young age so that now a course of action is like an instinct. Thank you! Thank you because you have not only been able to create a safe-action instinct, but also have facilitated the process of getting this instinct with the building codes set in place.

My father works in the construction business, so I know that building codes play a large role in the constructing and remodeling of a home. Thank you for playing that role in this process because for most people, buying their home will be the largest investment they make. Your

active presence, from the research that has been done to the regulations already set, allows for homeowners to have a sense of security and safety in their home—which once again, is most often taken for granted (and is also why I want to make sure credit is going where credit is due!) My father is currently working on rebuilding a house that was caught on fire. From what he has told me, the family that used to live in the house is traumatized and worried that it could happen to them again. Now that their house is being rebuilt, it is extremely important that all precautions are taken towards protecting their house and themselves from another fire, which thanks to you, will happen with the building codes.

I have barely scratched the surface with examples of why I need to thank you. However, if I am being realistic, I don't think I can ever give enough examples because the sense of safety and security you, through building codes, allow us to have is so integrated in our day to day lives. I can speak on behalf of most of the members of society when I say that we trust your judgment on the regulations set for the structural integrity, fire resistance, safe exits, lighting, ventilation and construction materials of a building. Thank you for keeping us safe with your decisions.

A grateful citizen,
Pierina Rossini